

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BUENOS 01236 151825Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SS-15 SSO-00 INR-07 INRE-00
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O 151746Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9109

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 1236

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: ELAB, PINS, SHUM, AR

SUBJECT: DISAPPEARANCE OF LOCAL POWER UNION LEADER

DEPT FOR ARA LABOR ADVISOR JOHN O'GRADY

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1199

1. ELMER FOSTER, IRO-FIET SECRETARY GENERAL, HAS REQUESTED THAT WE TRANSMIT FOLLOWING PERSONAL MESSAGE ON URGENT BASIS TO RETAIL CLERKS INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR GERRY O'KEEFE AND TO AFL-CIO'S ANDY MCLELLAN: "IT IS URGENT THAT THE AFL-CIO SEND CABLES TO PRESIDENT VIDELA AND TO THE JUNTA MILITAR EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LUZ Y FUERZA UNION LEADER OSCAR SMITH AND EXPRESSING HOPE THAT ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT SMITH IS FOUND SAFE AND SOUND. ALSO RECOMMEND CABLES TO LUZ Y FUERZA CUERPO GENERAL DE DELEGADOS, DEFENSA 453, CAPITAL FEDERAL, AND TO JUAN TACONE EXPRESSING SUPPORT."

2. FYI, THERE IS STILL NO SOLID INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON SMITH'S WHEREABOUTS OR AS TO WHO HAS HIM. ARGENTINE ARMY LIAISON CONTACT WITH TRADE UNIONISTS ALLEGED TO LABATT YESTERDAY THAT MONTONEROS HAVE SMITH. HOWEVER, POWER WORKER LEADER TACONE DISMISSES HYPOTHESIS THAT SMITH KIDNAPPED BY GUERRILLAS. TACONE BELIEVES GUERRILLAS WOULD HAVE ASSASSINATED SMITH ON THE SPOT. TO

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THE CONTRARY, TRADE UNIONISTS GENERALLY BELIEVE THAT THE KIDNAPPING BEARS THE HALLMARKS OF A TYPICAL JOINT OPERATION OF THE ARMED FORCES, INCLUDING THE USE OF THE TELLTALE FORD FALCONS. ADDITIONALLY, SMITH'S CAR REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN SPOTTED LOCKED IN A LOT USED BY POLICE AS DEPOSIT.

3. UNION SHOP STEWARDS ISSUED STRONGLY WORDED COMMUNIQUE DECLARING

THAT "SMITH WAS KIDNAPPED BY AN ABSOLUTELY MINORITARIAN GROUP, WHICH IS NOT WORTH PINPOINTING AS LEFTWING OR RIGHTWING. THE RESULT IS THE SAME," I.E., TO PROLONG THE LABOR DISPUTE IN THE POWER INDUSTRY, TO FOMENT VIOLENCE AND ANARCHY (AND, IMPLICITLY, TO DESTABILIZE THE GOVERNMENT). THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT AND THE SEGBA MANAGEMENT ALSO ISSUED COMMUNIQUE DEPLORING THE KIDNAPPING OF SMITH. IN PROTEST AGAINST HIS DISAPPEARANCE, POWER WORKERS IN THE GREATER BUENOS AIRES AREA WALKED OFF THEIR JOBS AGAIN YESTERDAY.

4. A NOTION GAINING CURRENCY IN TRADE UNION CIRCLES IS THAT SMITH MAY HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF "HARDLINERS" WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES WITH THE AIM OF PROVOKING A REINITIATION OF THE POWER STRIKE WHICH WAS SUSPENDED JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE THE KIDNAPPING, IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE THE INABILITY OF THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT TO MAINTAIN LABOR PEACE. ACCORDING TO THIS THESIS, THE END OBJECTIVE IS TO FORCE THE DISMISSAL OF VIDELA AS PRESIDENT AND OF GENERAL VIOLA AS ARMY CHIEF IN ORDER TO MAKE WAY FOR A NEW HARDLINING MILITARY GOVERNMENT. PLANNING MINISTER, GENERAL DIAZ BESSONE, IS SEEN AS A POSSIBLE BENEFICIARY OF SUCH A MOVEMENT, ACCORDING TO THIS LINE OF SPECULATION. HELPING TO FEED SUCH SPECULATION ARE REPORTS THAT VILA'S MEN HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN THE PAST WEEK ATTEMPTING TO DRUM UP TRADE UNION SUPPORT FOR VILA IN CASE VIDELA IS TOPPLED FROM POWER. END FYI.
CHAPLIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: KIDNAPPING, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BUENOS01236
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770053-1081
Format: TEL
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770242/aaaabkur.tel
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Litigation Code IDs:
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BUENOS AIRES 1199
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3323401
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DISAPPEARANCE OF LOCAL POWER UNION LEADER DEPT FOR ARA LABOR ADVISOR JOHN O'GRADY
TAGS: ELAB, PINS, SHUM, AR, US, (SMITH, OSCAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/bf48cec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009